R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 019 385 UD 006 165

QUALITY EDUCATION IN DE FACTO SEGREGATED SCHOOLS.

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PUB DATE 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.44 9P.

DESCRIPTORS- *EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, *SLUM SCHOOLS, *SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, *MENTAL HEALTH, *COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, DEFACTO SEGREGATION, COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS, TEACHER ROLE, ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES, SCHOOL ROLE, LEARNING EXPERIENCE, ADMINISTRATOR ROLE, NEGRO ORGANIZATIONS, DECENTRALIZATION, PARENT PARTICIPATION, SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY, DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, ACADEMIC FAILURE, MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

VARIOUS ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN GHETTO SCHOOLS HAVE FAILED. THE FACT THAT A FEW ALL BLACK SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL MERELY INDICATES THAT SEGREGATION OR FAMILY BACKGROUND MAY NOT BE THE MAJOR CAUSES OF GHETTO SCHOOL FAILURE. HOWEVER, A MEANINGFUL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE FOR THE GHETTO CHILD WILL NOT BE PROVIDED UNTIL THE ONUS OF HIS FAILURE TO LEARN IS REMOVED FROM HIM, AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT IS VIEWED AS THE FAILURE OF THE SCHOOL TO INSTRUCT. FURTHERMORE, ANY MEANINGFUL ATTEMPT TO EDUCATE THE GHETTO CHILD MUST INCLUDE A MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH AIMED AT INCREASING HIS FREQUENCY OF SUCCESS AND RAISING HIS LEVEL OF ASPIRATION. CONFLICTS IN VALUES BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND GHETTO STUDENTS AND THE ENTRENCHMENT OF INEFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATORS AND DEMORALIZED TEACHERS ADVERSELY AFFECTS THE GHETTO CHILD'S LEARNING. STRESS SHOULD BE PLACED ON ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION IN DE FACTO SEGREGATED SCHOOLS, WITH THE COMBINED FORCES OF "TEACHER POWER," "BLACK POWER," AND "PARENT POWER." A DECENTRALIZED SCHOOL SYSTEM INCORPORATING A MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH AND A "COMMISSION OF ACCOUNTABILITY" COMPOSED OF LOCAL PEOPLE COULD EFFECT CHANGE IN THE EMOTIONAL TONE OF GHETTO SCHOOLS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "CHANGING EDUCATION," VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3, FALL 1967. (NH)

Quality Education in De Facto Segregated Schools?

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Present programs of 'Quality Integrated Education' and compensatory education are proving ineffective in the ghettos, contends the author, who calls for major changes in the structure and curricula of slum schools.

In a recent position paper, developed with the collaboration of leaders of the New York I. S. 201 boycott and officials of the United Federation of Teachers, my colleague, Harry Gottesfeld, and I wrote:[13]

The civil-rights movement and the nation's anti-poverty efforts have focused attention upon the ghetto school. The children who attend these schools are several years behind middle-class children in academic achievement. These children will tend not to obtain the education and skills necessary to advance themselves economically. They will be forced to take whatever semiskilled and unskilled work is available. Many will be on welfare rolls. Barring some major changes in the educational system, their children will attend similar schools, be behind in academic achievement, and eventually obtain the less desirable types of jobs and live in impoverished areas of the city where social pathology indices such as crime, infant mortality, and deteriorated housing are the highest.

Teachers are at one with the parents of the city's school children in their concern with lack of achievement and reading retardation in the schools. As long as those who are closest to the needs of the children—their parents and their teachers—are left out of the decision-making in the educational process, the schools cannot succeed.

Given present problems, the school system cannot continue as an autonomous bureaucracy. Parents and community leaders must fulfill their right to exercise influence in educational policy. This alone, however, will not suffice to cure the system's ills. The role of the teacher must also change. At present he has no freedom in his work. He is restrained by a hierarchy, rising above him in increasing influence and decreasing understanding of classroom problems. In order to work to the full capacity of his training and ability, the teacher must be permitted to exercise the rights which his professionalism entails. He must be allowed to take responsibility for exercising independent action and making expert judgment while performing his work.

Teachers, like parents and the community, play an essential and irreplaceable role in the learning life of each child. The schools should be the mutual responsibility of these groups—a responsibility to be shared equally. Without this equal sharing of responsibility there can be no true accountability for learning progress.

Many of us concerned with contemporary education

have been storming the walls of the ghetto school with weapons hastily devised and imperfectly wrought—and with notably little success. Our aim is to reclaim these children behind the walls whom we have characterized as "culturally deprived," or "socially disadvantaged," or simply labeled collectively as "the poor." We have enriched school programs, rewritten textbooks, held human relations workshops, and rearranged curricula. But we have failed, and our failures have been grimly documented by the Coleman[5] and the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights[21] reports.

A Massive Failure

The documentation of the failure has been well done. The "conclusions," especially with reference to the beneficial effects of integration, are more wish-fulfilling than "factual." We will leave *our* documentation for another paper; but briefly, *my* conclusions from the above studies are as follows:

1. *"Compensatory education" has been introduced in a way to guarantee its failure.* (Cf. Gordon, 11, 12; Bredemeier, 2; Gittell, 8; Alsop, 1; Pressman, 20; Silberman, 26.)

2. *The children whose parents want them "bused into" white schools represent a highly selective sample.*

3. *Not enough emphasis is placed on the likelihood that children in integrated schools have better teachers.*

4. *The fact that a few all-black schools are doing a good job suggests that we need not necessarily look to segregation or family background as the main causal elements in the failure of ghetto school education.*

5. (And most important) *While a home environment may appear noxious or deficient, the school must resolve to educate the child without expecting major alterations in the home environment. It may even be argued, on a common-sense basis, that by providing children from disadvantaged home environments with skills and attitudes related to success, the school may have a stabilizing impact on the home environment. It is probable that for families beset by personal problems, or by problems related to poverty, the success of the child in school would do much to allay the guilt and anxiety which are byproducts of parental failure.*

Good Schools, Not Integration, Necessary

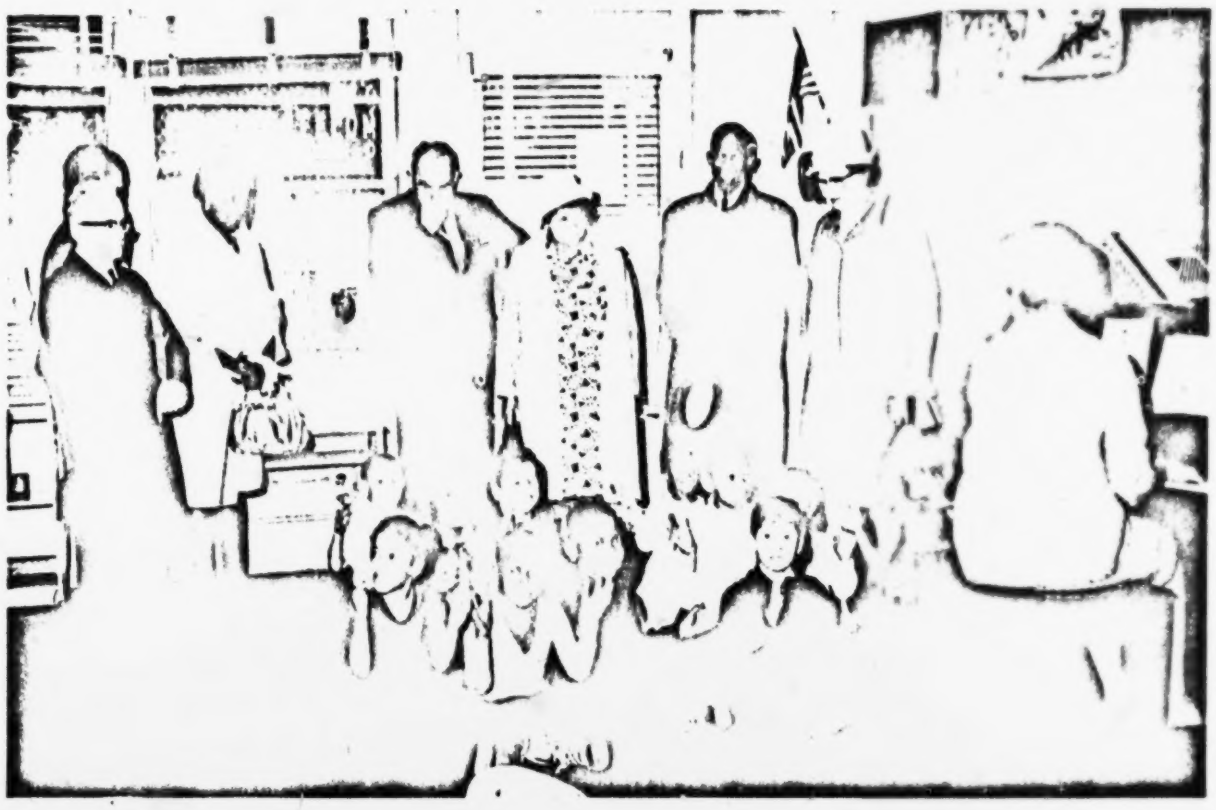
It is my belief that we will never provide a meaningful school experience for the ghetto child until we stop placing the onus of his failure to learn on him, his mode of life, his economic condition, his lack of motivation. (How odd that mental-health specialists seem unable to get across to educators that "lack of motivation" is a symptom and not a cause.) My hypothesis is that school failure in urban ghetto neighborhoods need not be attributed either to the fact of de facto segregated schools or to our failure to understand the perceptual or cognitive style of a particular subculture: that, if provided with the proper climate for learning and with skillful teachers, such children will learn equally as well as middle-class children. Ghetto children could learn equally well in all-black schools as in integrated schools.

Compensatory programs in education have missed the mark precisely because they concentrate on the child's failure to learn rather than the school's failure to instruct and because they avoid a central devastating fact of life in the ghetto—"powerlessness."

Learning and Mental Health

It is not surprising that large sections of the civil-rights movement, prime movers for educational change, are now rejecting the compensatory as well as the quality-integrated education approach as the answer to the problems of ghetto education and have substituted "quality education" as their goal. This paper outlines the development of a program rooted in the quality education approach, but with an added dimension. Any meaningful attempt to educate the ghetto child must include *mental health* as a significant factor at all levels of the educational process or the results will surely produce yet another wave of disappointment. Unfortunately, mental-health specialists in the schools have, for the most part, contented themselves with diagnosing those children with problems and have not "implemented" their findings by offering concrete recommendations for handling such children within the system *(Cf. Gordon, 9, 14)*. We can no longer speak only of "student mental health." It is time that we examined the over-all emotional climate of the underachieving ghetto school and the contributions made to that climate by the students, teachers, administrators, and parents who interact in the educative process.

If we move beyond the notion that schools are caught in an environmental trap from which they cannot escape, we are free to examine objectively the problems of the child who is unable to learn.



The More Effective Schools program in New York City is one of the most successful efforts to institute quality education in ghetto schools. Children in this classroom play a musical game, accompanied on the piano by their teacher, while members of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Teachers observe. No more than 22 pupils are in an MES classroom, and there are specialist teachers assigned to each of the 21 ME schools.

The NEA in its report *Schools for the '60s*[24] stated that:

> *An important fact, which is not always recognized by educators, is that every child has an inner push to become a more complete self, to learn what can become meaningful to him. The art of teaching lies in stimulating this force and in keeping it alive, free, and developing. To do so, it is essential to understand the learner, to know what he is working on, what he is against, what his basic assets are.*

Yet, as we examine the academic achievement of many of our urban slum children, this "inner push" seems to be missing. When we see these children in kindergarten, they appear as receptive as middle-class children. By the time they reach the fifth grade, however, a great many are sullen, angry, and impervious to education. *(Cf. Clark 4.)*

Great numbers of children leave our schools without a sense of commitment, but instead with a sense of apathy and resignation. The test of a school's contribution to society includes the extent to which the student views "living" as an exciting challenge, rather than a chore. At its best, constructive personal growth involves the thrust of the individual for self-actualization. Learning and mental health are interwoven. The school must be held "accountable" when large numbers of children are not learning, and are not responding constructively to stress and change. In situations where the majority of children are not learning, it must be assumed that poor teaching and mental health practices are operative, and teachers and community groups must unite to set forth the conditions necessary for constructive change.

Environmental Mastery

Jahoda[16] discusses six components involving multiple criteria for the establishment of some empirical and operational indicators for mental health. The component "environmental mastery" appears especially relevant for the school. Environmental mastery is the process by which the child forms his attitudes toward work and play, and the school introduces him to a new range of confrontations involving the mastery of skills and the practice and rehearsal of interpersonal relations. If the confrontations are grounded in failure, and if that failure is pervasive and without relief, the child is handicapped in what ego strength he brings to the resolution of later conflicts.

There is a growing body of evidence that the schools are not effectively teaching environmental mastery at the present time, and we witness large numbers of children who are bored, passive, disillusioned, and angry. When we consider the fact that the school is the single social agency which sees every child daily over the years, the implications for mental health cannot be exaggerated.

We tend to treat children as we perceive them. If we perceive them as different, as intellectually crippled, as ineducable, and teach them with these levels of expectation, they will perceive our hopes for them very early in their

Simon Beagle, Effective Schools consultant to the American Federation of Teachers, and one of the nation's strongest advocates of quality education programs in the ghettos, speaks to the 1967 AFT convention in Washington, D.C.

learning experiences. Children who are categorized as inferior suffer a sense of humiliation which infuses their attitudes toward school and the learning process. They learn from our attitudes to dislike themselves, and tend to function in a self-defeating, self-destructive manner. This self-hate can be self-directed, resulting in depressed, apathetic behavior, or can be projected on to society in the form of delinquent behavior.

If our goals are for each child to develop optimally, we must discover ways to show the child he is worthwhile, that he has a place in society, that he is needed and not surplus. We can develop the most advanced curricula, we can construct the most modern buildings; but we will not educate if we do not give youngsters the pride and hope for themselves that is vital to the learning process.

Importance of the Teacher

The teacher is responsible for the kind of classroom which creates feelings of personal adequacy in children. Through his relationship with the child, he can contribute toward the development of these positive feelings toward self and others which make learning possible. In the urban ghetto school, a dynamic teacher can have a dramatic impact upon the learner, both as a source of motivation, and as a focal point for positive identifications. Since it is not as difficult to educate well-motivated youngsters, our finest teachers should be directed toward the ghetto school. But urban ghetto schools have the highest rate of teacher-turnover and suffer from a general climate of frustration and low morale. The feelings of worthlessness in such schools seem to be generated to the staffs as if teaching in such schools is a punishment, rather than a challenge.

Our current notion of education places a high premium on intellectualism and tends to inhibit "feeling" and "risking" between individuals. *(Cf. Gordon 10.)* Somehow the human being has gotten lost in the planning. Although we have much to learn about teaching skills to children on a verbal level, involvement probably takes place on a gut level, and it is interesting to question students about their feelings rather than about their understandings.

It is time to move beyond the myth that low-income children need a special setting in order to learn, and make an energetic attempt to promote the greatest possible individual growth within the existing group setting. The school in an urban slum can and should significantly enhance a child's cognitive and emotional development even if his home and neighborhood are reinforcing what society considers inappropriate attitudes and habits. As Fritz Redl[22] states:

> *Success in any area of living can act as an emotional tonic. Damage done to a child in his home or neighborhood can be partially repaired by satisfactory school experiences. Since the school is built around learning activities, the mastery of new skills and knowledge is the focus of such pleasant experiences. Their importance as such should not be undervalued.*

More Effective Schools

A number of recent educational developments support my belief that ghetto children, with their burden of severe environmental handicaps, can and will learn as well as middle-class children when they are provided with the proper climate for learning and with skillful teachers, whether in all-black or integrated schools. Results obtained in the heart of New York's slums in a few schools with exceptional principals, in some of the More Effective Schools, developed by the United Federation of Teachers, as well as All Day Neighborhood Schools, testify to the fact that these children can learn. This is corroborated by the results of the work done by Samuel Shepard, Jr. in St. Louis, with an almost completely black student body and staff.* Findings such as these lead us to conclude that we must look beyond the child and his surroundings for the causes of schoolwide figures of nonachievement.

Martin Deutsch[6] suggests that ghetto children enter the

*Recent 1967 studies by New York's Center for Urban Education of the More Effective Schools and U.S. Commission on Civil Rights with reference to the work in the Banneker District have concluded that these programs have had little or no impact on academic achievement. My own study of both reports, as well as personal observations of the New York and St. Louis programs, has impelled me to opposite conclusions. A report documenting this statement is now being readied for publication.

During this fall's teacher work stoppage in New York City, parents of ghetto children enrolled in More Effective Schools came out to a mass rally with the teachers of their children to demand that the New York City school board expand the MES program. As part of the back-to-work agreement, the board agreed to allocate $10 million for quality-education programs like MES.

school situation so poorly prepared to produce *what the school demands* that failure is almost inevitable. *(Italics mine.)* Examining the environmental and psychological factors upon which intellectual growth is predicated, Deutsch suggests that stimulus deprivation, experiential poverty, and inadequate training in auditory and visual discrimination are responsible for the cultural disadvantage which the child bears with him to primary school. Yet he also makes the point that in the first grade we see only the smallest differences among socioeconomic or racial groups in intellectual, linguistic, and conceptual measures.

Conflicts in Values

It is this author's contention that Riessman's[23] "style-of-life" factors do not critically affect the development of academic skills and attitudes at very early ages. As Deutsch noted, differing socioeconomic groups of first-graders show only slight differences from each other in learning potential. If we assume that learning patterns established during the early years of the school career are crucial to the later development of critical thinking and concept formation, then we must investigate the manner in which the earliest classes are conducted. Do these children receive educational stimulation comparable to that provided the middle-class child? It is my contention that the schools impoverish the black child by offering him less than that given the more fortunate student; furthermore, what is provided is many times unsuited to his needs. It is true as Deutsch states, that children from disadvantaged areas are likely to be deprived of many of the experiences that facilitate learning; at the same time, it is also true that the educational system fails to compensate for these differences.

There is very often a conflict between the teacher's values and the child's, between those of the school and the surrounding neighborhood. Hard work, a delay in reward and gratification, an emphasis on obedience and intellectual achievement—these may often be at odds with a child's personal ambitions. Teachers must be brought to recognize that the values of the school are goals rather than prerequisites for learning.

It may be argued that the school is unable to provide stimulating classes because of the almost continuous crisis situations when emotionally maladjusted children disrupt the classroom and teaching procedures. We recognize the fact that a greater incidence of maladjustment may be expected because of the crippling environment of these children. We know, of course, that significant and special problems do exist in these schools. With the very best staff it would still be difficult to teach some children in poor neighborhoods because each classroom contains a disproportionate number of physically and emotionally handicapped children. But it is a mistake to label the *entire* school population as maladjusted. Let us remember that normal children are expected to learn normally—but this does not happen in the ghetto school. As for the disturbed minority, let us identify them as quickly as possible and develop special programs for them which are designed to return as many as possible to the main flow of school society.

It has been argued by educators that the school is not the proper setting for programs designed to rehabilitate the maladjusted child. I am convinced that the most hopeful opportunity for success with these children may be found within the framework of the elementary school. Very often,

while emphasizing psychological and medical treatment strategies, we have neglected educational methods which may well be more effective. *(Cf. Gordon 14.)* Whatever the method of rehabilitation, however, it should be realistically applied. It would be ludicrous, for instance, to apply suggested national education norms—one counselor for every 600 pupils or one mental health team for every 20,000 pupils—to children in urban ghetto schools. This would have the effect of depriving up to one-third of all children of the opportunity to learn.

Many school administrators fail to realize that special classes and provisions for emotionally-disturbed and brain-injured children are valid only if properly administered. But then this applies also to other fashionable nostrums now prescribed for our ghetto schools—enrichment, remediation, increased numbers of psychologists, guidance personnel, social workers, etc.

Noneffective Administrators

When we begin to look at the schools themselves and the manner in which they are run, when we replace our emphasis on the child's failure to learn with an examination of the school's failure to teach, we see a system composed of entrenched school administrators and a group of predominately demoralized teachers. For the most part, those who are in charge of our inferior segregated schools of today have been in the same positions for the last 10 or 20 years. They make up an "Educational Establishment," unanswerable to staff and community, which meets its responsibilities by instituting compensatory programs and by issuing pious pamphlets calling for integration and quality education. (What public educator—outside the South—isn't for integration these days?) When laymen have the temerity to call these career-administrators to task, the only responses are stock excuses couched in the latest professional jargon: "cultural deprivation," "short attention span," "non-deferred gratification," etc. Only a handful of exceptional principals have successfully met the challenge and built a teaching school in the ghetto.

Demoralized Teachers

Teachers are, for the most part, demoralized by the conditions under which they work. Serving under bureaucratic administrators, experiencing long delays in getting repairs and equipment, receiving ambiguous and unrealistic direction, subjected to innumerable inservice human relations courses, stymied in an atmosphere lacking competition for achievement, they may choose to continue only the motions of teaching or they may leave the profession altogether. Thousands of teachers do just that each year, frustrated by the feeling of powerlessness generated by their inability to effect the smallest changes in administrative or bureaucratic procedures. The few good administrators share this feeling, recognizing that bureaucratic minutia are masquerading as educational procedure. It is true, of course, that some of the teachers who leave the teaching ranks are unsuited to the profession, but they do not make up the bulk of the defectors. Most of these teachers leave because of conditions within the schools, while others find themselves ill-prepared to teach the children of the poor. Teacher-training institutions are responsible for the latter condition, a subject which is, however, outside the scope of this paper.

Commissions of Accountability

Figures of nonachievement which run through an entire school can be attributed for the most part to a noneffective entrenched principal and a demoralized teaching staff. Something must be done to change this situation. A "Commission of Accountability" must be created when a school is bankrupt. Do-nothing principals should not be permitted to remain where conditions of quality education are not provided; they must be held responsible for what goes on in their schools. Teachers and community groups must unite to set forth the conditions necessary for a good school, and they must demand that administrators be held accountable for their performances. *(Cf. Gordon 13.)* The Commission could perhaps elect its own principal—at the very least it should have the power to ratify his appointment—and his tenure would be subject to its review. Decentralized control of curriculum and personnel selection may be necessary in these schools, along with a conscious attempt to build a favorable educational climate, when the Educational Establishment has proven bankrupt.

Perhaps we will find that nothing will be lost if the staff begins to utilize its own resources advising supervisors, audio-visual directors, human relations experts, etc., to stop making their frequent appearances at what might now be called the decentralized school. Teachers, guided by community demands and suggestions, could organize their own inservice courses, plan their own curriculum innovations, organize their own system of helping new teachers, and develop their own supervisory practices.

Such a plan, in the context of a meaningful decentralization of all big city school systems, would go far to ameliorate the existing feelings of powerlessness experienced both by teachers in the classroom and, in a more pervading sense, by the residents of the ghetto. Perhaps, in this fashion, our finest teachers could be encouraged to enter these schools, lured by the possibilities of working with imaginative administrators of proven ability and sharing

At a press conference in New York City, leaders of the teacher union movement explain their program for More Effective Schools. From left, facing the TV camera, are Charles Loracono, field representative, of the United Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2; Charles Cogen, AFT national president; Albert Shanker, UFT president; and Si Beagle, Effective Schools consultant to the AFT.

in an exciting venture. Too often teachers equate their duty in the slum schools with punishment. If, however, the teacher could be caught up in a cooperative effort to create an atmosphere of academic excellence, teaching in these schools would become the exciting challenge that it should be. This must be tried despite the challenge posed by Harvey Pressman[19] who questions the capability of the public educational system to implement programs to educate the poor.

Teacher Power and Black Power

There is a growing militancy in the American Federation of Teachers which has met with considerable success of late by placing emphasis on "teacher power" in the schools. Elsewhere, my colleague, Harry Gottesfeld,[15] and I have proposed that an alliance between "teacher power" and "black power" would be the most logical combination of forces for educating children now in the ghetto. For that devastating fact of ghetto powerlessness would in some measure be refuted when community groups acquire the power to help upgrade their own schools. Changes in self-perception and esteem are almost certain to accompany positions of responsibility calling for meaningful decision-making. This cannot but have positive effects upon their children. An entirely new attitude of self-respect and educational involvement might be nurtured when they find themselves and their families of extreme importance in the running of their all-black school. This is comparable to the positive psychological results noted in youngsters who become involved with boycotts or civil-rights demonstrations. *(Cf. Estelle Fuchs' [7] excellent study of the New York City school boycott.)* By involving the community in the actual building of quality education, we will be giving children the pride and hope that is a vital prerequisite for learning.

At the same time, subtle changes might very well occur in the teachers' perception of their students. Viewed as deprived and indifferent, handicapped by their teachers' conclusions that little can be done to educate them until environmental changes can be effected, these children are not expected to measure up to any but very low educational levels. When they emerge as the offspring of fellow Commission members, however, or neighbors of those who share responsibility and prestige, teachers will tend to see them as individuals with potentials and unique characteristics to be found and developed.

These Commissions of Accountability, or Local School Boards in decentralized school systems, will work effectively only if members of the community become interested in the schools and willingly mobilize themselves for action. That this can happen may be questioned by those who accept the widespread assumption that poverty inevitably produces an indifferent attitude toward education. Brookover and Gottlieb,[3] reviewing studies of the relationship between social classes and school achievement, have concluded that the belief that social classes differ in the value they attach to education is questionable. The poor may be less sophisticated in communicating their values to the educational bureaucracy and in defining their levels of aspiration, but the recent demands by minority groups for equal educational opportunities indicates that they do indeed attach value to education.

The proposals outlined here are directed toward the existing ghetto school, not because we have abandoned the principle of integration, but, rather, because we must acknowledge our obligation toward the children who are *now* in the urban slum. We can no longer ignore the fact that many of our large city public school systems already have nonwhite enrollments which make up more than 50 per-

cent of the entire student body.* While many of us consider the eventual integration of the races a necessary goal for our democratic society, the "black-power" position makes a great deal of sense both politically and in terms of the individual's self-image. As Floyd McKissick [18] writes when he challenges the view that a really superior school for Afro-Americans must be integrated:

The parents of I.S. 201 have an answer. . . . They contend: If the school is organized and run differently, and if the school is more directly involved with forces which it now treats as outside its concern, student achievement would rise. Educational excellence without integration is possible.

These parents knew—perhaps better than the professional educators—that their individual and collective feeling of powerlessness and the resulting lack of self-respect had had and would continue to have a crippling effect upon their children. . . .

In I.S. 201, the parents have sought another way to compel accountability—to insure that they are no longer dismissed as irrelevant, untutored, ignorant, and inferior. They say: we don't care what you think. We want a say and we are going to have a say. And they may be right. They certainly have not yet been proven wrong. Maybe a school committed to respect the individual, a school enjoying the confidence and support of the community, a school reorganized to reflect its faith in the pupil and the parent, can achieve excellence—even if that community is poor and black.

It might even offer as much as the opportunity to be bused at 8 a.m. into a hostile lily-white suburb to attend a school where acceptance is from 9 to 3 and where membership in the glorious student culture is merely at sufferance.

Racist, 'No-Win' Policy

Unfortunately, many "black-power" advocates, accustomed to defeat and despair, have turned increasingly to a "racist" position; and as a result have operated, without conscious intent, a "no-win strategy." In the ghetto schools, this has often resulted in unfair attacks on teachers. But more significant has been their failure to develop an educational plan as part of an alliance with teachers. "Black power," translated in terms of thousands of elected and appointed black officials which, in turn, would mean jobs and other opportunities for additional hundreds of thousands of black people, could be the most significant progressive force in America. Black power serving racist goals will mean defeat and despair for both white and black America. The 1967 summer riots in scores of cities are a preview of a racist alternative. The more compelling issues of the racial crisis are not within the province of this paper. An impressive contribution to this area by Louis S. Levine,[17] however, should be read by all educators. Returning to the main focus of this paper—educators of black children ("education" and "power" are not, of course, unrelated)—Al Shanker,[25] president of the United Federation of Teachers, presents the challenge of education in the ghetto in realistic terms:

. . . Conflict between teachers and parents is most tragic. It is tragic because the parents do not see that massive educational failure cannot be explained by a simple good teacher-bad teacher theory, for the truth is that both teachers and students are being destroyed by a rotten system. It is tragic because that system can be changed only if parents and teachers enter into a partnership for educational revolution—a partnership which is made impossible if parents blame educational disaster on bad teachers and teachers blame it on bad parents. (The situation is further aggravated in that labelling teachers in ghetto schools as "bad teachers" accelerates the flight of teachers from these schools and deters many others from accepting assignments. Teaching, in itself, is difficult; but to teach while engaging in a constant need to defend one's self against parental and community attack is impossible.)

. . . Success or failure for your children depends upon what goes on in the classroom. We should reject efforts to create the illusion that after-school activities, summer programs and remedial work can undo the damage caused by failure in the classroom. If we are to demand quality in the classroom, there is no substitute for adequate compensation to attract and retain teachers and class size small enough so that each child receives individual instruction. (Federal aid monies should have been used to make education more effective in the room instead of trying to remedy failure after it's too late.)

Teachers want to teach, but many don't know how. College courses do not produce teachers. Many teachers, after great effort, give up. Unsuccessful techniques of teaching are replaced by successful techniques of survival in the classroom. Teachers need help on-the-job. Teachers need an internship, the help and support of successful colleagues.

. . . The present administrative-supervisory system is a barrier to educational improvements. Principals are much more responsive to the administrative and clerical problems of headquarters than they are to the classroom problems of teachers and children. We should give serious consideration to changing this by having supervisors in each school elected for a given term of office by the tenured staff. Elections do not always

*Washington, D.C., 91 percent; Baltimore, 63 percent; St. Louis, 62 percent; Philadelphia, 58 percent; Detroit, 57 percent; Chicago, 53 percent (as reported in *Time*, March 24, 1967, p. 35).

produce the best people (neither does the present system), but elected principals would be more concerned with classroom problems than the prompt filing of clerical forms.

Neither teachers nor parents have the power to bring about such changes by themselves. Together, they cannot fail.

Summary

Programs designed to improve education in community schools—and particularly in de facto segregated schools—must incorporate a mental health approach aimed at increasing the frequency of success and the heightening of levels of aspiration of each child. Curriculum innovations along with the many compensatory techniques which have been employed in ghetto neighborhoods cannot bring looked-for results until the child is able to grow and thrive in the school's emotional environment. It is our contention that ghetto children can learn in neighborhood schools; attention should be given learning disturbances in kindergarten and first grade as a means of primary prevention since early learning experiences are of great importance in molding critical thinking and educational attitudes. The disproportionate number of disturbed children present in the classes—and we must remember that the majority of slum children are not disturbed—makes it mandatory to devise specially designed rehabilitative programs. A "Commission of Accountability" offers an opportunity to mobilize teachers and community for the purpose of upgrading education in their own decentralized school; above all, it will make administrators accountable for what is happening in their institutions. Such a Commission may be able to effect dramatic changes in the emotional tone of the ghetto school.

This is the challenge. Teachers and mental health specialists must take the initiative in forging hundreds of alliances with local community organizations and civil rights groups to achieve increased local autonomy and effect basic changes in the schools—in Bedford-Stuyvesant, in Watts, in New Orleans, and, indeed, in every black and "Spanish" neighborhood in this country. No bureaucratic Educational Establishment will find itself more powerful than such a coalition.

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Childhood

Can I forget—
The barren chalked garret
In which we huddled,
Curling from cold,
Fighting for the shifting coats?

Can I forget—
The stinking cellar
Where the sunshine was alien
And the orange crate bare?

Can I forget—
Mother, nursing the lame
Washing the ghetto dead—
For scanty crumbs?

I can't forget
When still trapped
On the hook of greed
Warding off the hurt
Of the desperate claws.

—HENRI PERCIKOW